

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

QUEEN

A T

WHITE-HALL,

A P R I L 2. 1690.

Being the *Fifth Wednesday* in L E N T.

By *WILLIAM WAKE*, D. D. Chaplain in
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L O N D O N :

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1 Tim. V. 22.

Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other mens sins.



SAINTE Paul having planted a Christian Church at Ephesus, and being called by his Apostolick Charge to Preach the Gospel to other places also, settles Timothy there to supply what was yet wanting to the full Establishment of it; and not long after his departure, sends him this Epistle to instruct him how he should *behave himself in the house of* 1 Tim. iii. 15. God, and fulfil that great Trust which was committed to him therein.

In the Verses before the Text, we find him directing this Holy man, how he should proceed in inflicting the Censures of the Church upon Offenders, viz. That he should First admonish them openly, in the presence of the whole Congregation; That so both they who had Sinned, might be the more earnestly moved to Repent themselves of it; and that others being terrified thereby, might have the greater care how

2 Cor. ii.—6.
Chrys. Hom.
xv. in 1 Tim.

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they fell into the like Sins, least they also became exposed to the same Correction, *v. 20.* *Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*

2dly. That he should proceed in these judgments Uprightly and Sincerely, without Partiality, without Fear or Favour to any, *v. 21.* *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, that thou observe these things ; that is, that thou proceed according to these Rules, in exercising the Discipline of the Church upon Offenders ; without preferring one before another, or as our Margin reads it, without prejudice, doing nothing by partiality.*

Lastly, That having tied any man by the Censures of the Church, he should have a care not to make too much hast to loose him again, and Restore him to the Communion of it ; but should diligently enquire into, and prove his Repentance : Least by his easiness in receiving Sinners into Favour, he should lessen their Fear and Apprehension of Sinning, and so bring upon himself the Guilt of those Crimes which such an unwarrantable lenity would be like to encourage wicked men to commit, when they should see how little it would cost them

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to expiate their *Sins*, and satisfy the *Church* for them, v. 22.

Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other mens sins.

It is a difficulty that has somewhat divided both the Ancient and Modern Interpreters of this passage, To what it is that *the laying on of hands* here spoken of is to refer? Whether to the *Admitting* of persons into *Holy Orders* in the *Church*; or, as I have before explain'd it, to the *receiving Penitents* into the *Communion* of it? For in both these *Cases* the Ancient Christians made use of this *Ceremony* of *Laying on of hands*.

If we understand the Exhortation of the *Text* with reference to the *Former* of these, the meaning of it will be this: That he should have a care diligently to *examine* the *Faith*, and to *enquire* into the *Lives* and *Manners* of those whom he admitted into any *Holy Office* or *Function* in the *Church*; and see that they were duly qualified for it, according to those *Rules* Chap. iii. 5. which he had before so largely given him for that very purpose.

But tho I shall not presume to censure this account of these *Words*, yet I must confess I think

think the *Latter Interpretation* of them which I before gave, as it equally agrees with the expression of *St. Paul*, and with the *Primitive Custom* of laying on *Hands* upon those whom they received again into *Communion* after having fulfilled the *Penance* imposed upon them for their *Sins*; so does it seem to me somewhat better to agree with the rest of the *Apostle's* exhortation in that place. And the Consideration which he lays before him to engage him to this Care, is no other than what we find from hence transcribed sometimes into the *Penitential Canons* of the *Ancient Church*; namely, lest by his Remission in this particular, he should have *Other mens sins imputed to his account*, and be responsible to God, for all those Crimes which he neglected to punish with that severity he ought to have done.

But which soever of these two be the true meaning of *St. Paul's* charge in the former part of the *Text*, *Lay hands suddenly on no man*: The reason of it in the latter will be in both the same; namely, that *Timothy* by his negligence in either of these Cases would have rendered himself *Guilty of other mens sins*, and therefore ought to be very careful and Circumspect, that he might not do so. And

And this is the *Use* which I shall now make of *these Words*. It is a matter of sad and serious Consideration that we who labour, the very best of us, under so great a load of our *own Sins*, should yet as if that were not sufficient to ruine us, add every day a number of other mens to them, to encrease our Account, and aggravate our Condemnation. There is I believe but seldom a day passes, wherein we do not some of us render ourselves Guilty in this particular. I speak not now with reference to those, who not only live in an Habitual commission of the most heinous Sins themselves, but take a great deal of satisfaction, and even make it their daily Employment, to draw as many others as they can into the Commission of them. As if they meant to Emulate the impiety of those whom St. Paul has characterized, or rather branded in *Holy Scripture*, as the most Desperate and Diabolical of any in the World, *Rom. i. 32. Who knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in those that do them.*

No, a man need not rise up to such a height of Villany, to render^v himself Guilty in the sight of God, of *Other mens transgressions*. He may be so at a much lesser rate; and that I fear upon such accounts, as the best of us all shall hardly be able ut-

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terly to clear our selves of it. I shall therefore make it my endeavour in a few reflections to shew,

1st. What those Circumstances are whereby we may be most likely to render our selves partakers of other mens sins? From whence it will appear,

2^{dly}. How careful we ought to be, of our selves and our Actions, that we may keep our selves from being so.

3rd. What those Circumstances are, whereby we may render our selves partakers of other mens sins?

For the better clearing of which Point, I shall in the first place lay down this as a Principle out of all doubt; That no man becomes a partaker of the Sins of another, but by his own Act, i. e. by somewhat which himself does to involve his Soul in the Guilt of it. For *else*, as a great man among the Heathens themselves very well argued, another mans wickedness might be my Evil, which, says he, God would not have, that it might not be in another mans power to make me unhappy.

Marc.
Ant. lviii.
Sect. 53.

'Tis true indeed so great was the care of God heretofore to restrain the Jews from an Idolatrous Worship, that he threatned for this Sin to visit the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children unto the third and

and fourth Generation; i.e. upon those who could not possibly have been in any manner accessary to their Impieties. But besides that there is a great deal of difference, between being partakers of other mens Sins, and being Visited, or Punished upon Occasion of them; and that too only with some Temporal Evils, such as their own Sins had very well deserved: We are plainly assured by God himself, *Ezekiel xviii.* that even this complaint should be taken away; The Children should no more bear *Ezek. xviii.* the Iniquity of their fathers, neither the fathers of their Children, but the Soul that sinned it should die. And in all the accounts we meet with in the New Testament of the judgment to come, we are expressly told that every man shall receive according to his own works; or as our Apostle has Phrased it, *Gal. vi. 5.* Every man shall bear his own Burden.

It remains therefore that no one either becomes partaker of the Guilt of another mans Sins now, or shall be Punish'd for them hereafter, any farther than he has by some Circumstance or other render'd himself accessary thereunto. And our present business must be to enquire how many ways a man may do so? Now those are in General these three:

- (1st.) By giving Occasion to other mens sins,
- (2^{dly}) By Approving of them when Committed. And

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Ill^{dly}. By

(3^{dly}), By neglecting to hinder them from committing them when we might and ought to have done it.

(1st), A man may become a partaker of Other mens Sins, by giving Occasion to the Committing of them.

This is in General so very clear that I do not know that it has ever been deny'd or doubted of by any. But now how many ways a man may become so far the Occasion of anothers Sin, as to render himself thereby a partaker in the Guilt of it, I shall not undertake precisely to define. I will offer some of those that are the most obvious, and particularly reflected on as such in the *Holy Scriptures*.

And First, He who Contrives the Commission of any Sin, and either by his Authority over any other Commands, or else by his Arguments and insinuations Persuades him to commit it; it is not to be question'd but that such a one does undoubtedly thereby render himself partaker of it.

This was the case of David in the business of *Uriah*, 2 Sam. chap. xith & xiith: When having committed *Adultery* with *Bathsheba*, and not knowing otherwise how to prevent the scandal of it; he order'd *Joab*, who then commanded the Royal Army

my before Rabbah, to set Uriah her husband in the fore-front of the hottest Battel, that he might be smitten and dye; and so he might take Bathsheba to be his Wife. But tho Joab therefore executed the Command, and the Enemy slew him as he had projected it; yet God charges neither the one nor the other of them with his Death. He lays the whole Guilt of his Bloud at the King's door, who had been the Occasion of it; 2 Sam. xii. 9. Wherefore, says the Prophet, hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite, with the sword: --- Thou hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. And then he goes on in the next verses to pronounce Judgment against him upon the account of it; Now therefore the sword shall not depart from thy house: Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house; and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lye with thy wives in the sight of this sun: For thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before this sun.

And immediately upon this Admonition we find David himself confessing his Sin, and imploring God's forgiveness, v. 13. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And in that great Penitential Psalm, Psal. li. composed

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on purpose to be a standing memorial in the *House of God*, of his *Humiliation* and *Repentance* for this very *sin*, he particularly acknowledges himself guilty of the *murder of Uriah*, and deprecates *God's* anger upon the account of it, v. 14.

Pfal. li. 14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God! thou God of my Salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

The truth is, such a one as this, is for the most part more guilty of the *Sin* committed, than he who was either over-aw'd or perswaded into the *Commission* of it. For tho every man ought to have such a care of himself, and such a concern for his duty, as not to suffer either the *Authority* of the *Greatest Person*, or the *Insinuations* of the *Dearest Friend* in the world, to be able to prevail with him in a matter where the *Glory of God*, and the *Salvation* of his own *Soul* are at stake: Yet there is a certain easiness and tenderness in our natures, that not only too much exposes us to be overcome by such persons as we have either a very great value for, or have otherwise been very much obliged to, and do what we ought not, out of a false and unreasonable regard to them; but does also render us many times extremely pityable; tho not excusable, in the doing of it. Whilst he who thus executes the office of the *Devil*; projects the *Villany*, and prompts us to
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the *Execution* of it, must remain utterly *inexcusable* both in the sight of *God* and *Man*, for his *Impiety*.

But Secondly, A man may be the *occasion* of anothers sin, and so become *Partaker* of it, tho he does not in so eminent a *degree* as this concur to it ; if he does but in any other manner truly and effectually assist him in the committing of it.

Now this may be done many ways: As,

1st. By contributing a *helping hand* to the doing of it: Upon which account it was a Constitution of the *Roman Law*, That if one committed a *Theft* by the assistance of another ; as for instance, If one set a *ladder ready*, or *left a door open*, that another might go in and *steal* his neighbours goods ; he was adjudged thereby to be *partaker* of the *Crime*, and stood liable to the same *Punishment* that the other did, who committed the *Robbery*.

*Inst. l. iv.
Tit. 1. Sect.
Interdum.*

And the same must be said, 2^{dly}, of him who *counsels* and *advises* another to any *sin* ; and thereby puts him upon the *Execution* of it : As if, for example, a man should persuade another in necessity, to supply his own wants by *stealing* or *defrauding* his neighbour of his Goods.

And especially, 3^{dly}, If he not only in general *advises* him to do this, but in particular, *points out*

to him a fair occasion, to put his *advice* in execution. As if, for instance, he should not only counsel him in *General* to *steal* ; but should moreover tell him where a *good Booty* was to be had ? How he might get into his *Neighbours House* ? What *time* would be the most *proper* for it ? And in *what* part of the *House* he should find what he went for ?

Nay but 4thly. Tho a man should not go so far as this, nor be at all *guilty* of *helping* or *advising* his neighbour to do *Evil* ; yet If he *gives* his *Consent* to it ; If he encourage him in the *Performance*, and approves his doing of it ; He does even by this render himself *partaker* of the *Guilt* of it.

Serm. de
Sanctis. i,
iv, v.

Acts xxii.
20.

'Tis upon this account that *St. Austin* charges *St. Paul* with the *Death* of the *Blessed Steven*. He was none of the *Witnesses* against him, nor did he *throw* one *Stone* at him. But he *was* standing *by*, and *consenting* unto his *death* ; and he kept the *raiment* of them that *slew* him. And by doing of this he rendered himself no less *Guilty* than the most *zealous* of those that appeared against him. Others cast the *Stones* at him ; but *St. Paul* slew him by their hands.

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The Sum of this *Second Remark* is in short this: That whatsoever the Means be by which any one *assists* another in his *Wickedness*; if he *knows* the thing to be *Evil*, and yet still goes on to *promote* and *encourage* the *Execution* of it; He *sins* thereby against his *own Soul*, and shall render an Account to *God* for every such *Crime*, as any Other shall have committed by his *Help* and *Assistance*.

But I must go yet farther: For,

Thirdly, A Man may be adjudged by *God* to be the *occasion* of *other mens Sins*, and as such to *partake* in them, tho' he do's not thus *directly* contribute to the *Execution* of them. And that especially by these *two ways*: * By his *wicked Doctrine*; and, * By the *Scandal* and *Influence* of a *bad Example*: And by either of which, if another be led into *Sin*, we find the Person who conducted but even thus far towards it, nevertheless charged by *God* as *Partaker* of it.

First, He that advances any *wicked Doctrine*, whereby either to *deceive* Men into the *commission* of *Sin*, or to *strengthen* them in it, do's thereby render himself *Partaker* of their *Evil-doings*.

It was a sad Complaint which *God* once made against the *Prophets* of old, *Ezek. xiii.* That they *prophefied falsely* in his *Name*, and *seduced* his people, by *palliating their Vices*, and *sowing Pillows* under

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Ezek. xlii. 3.
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their Arms, and not suffering them to see their Danger ; saying still Peace, peace, and there was no Peace. But God denounces a terrible Judgment against them for their so doing, at the third and following Verses : Thus saith the LORD, Wo unto the foolish Prophets that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing. Who say, The LORD saith, and the Lord hath not sent them. Therefore thus saith the LORD God ; My hand shall be upon the Prophets that see Vanity and that divine Lies, and I will accomplish my Wrath upon them, to wit, upon the Prophets of Israel, which prophesie concerning Jerusalem, and see Visions of Peace for her, and there is no Peace, saith the LORD God.

It would, I fear, be a melancholy Reflection to consider, how many of these kind of Prophets there are at this time among us, who by false Principles and mistaken Notions of Christianity, that I do not add, and by their open Profaneness too, by their new Systems both of Faith and Morality, fall under the same Censure, and thereby involve their Souls in a greater Destruction.

But indeed, What Other Account can we give of all those Principles and Doctrines, whereby some extenuate the Danger, others cover over the very Nature of Sin ? Some lead men ignorantly into it, by teaching them that what is indeed unlawful, may innocently be done by them ; Others let them see
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and know what they do, but then tell them they run no great hazard in the doing of it: A little *Sorrow* and *Confession* at the last, and all is secure. Or should the worst that can happen, yet alas! *Hell* is no such dreadful Place as 'tis commonly misapprehended to be: It being unreasonable to think that *God* should punish a few *Temporary Sins*, with *Everlasting Torments*. In short, That 'tis but to *die*, and *perish*, and *enjoy nothing*; and why then should a man trouble himself with the *dull Formality* of *Religion* now, when he has so little to apprehend and be afraid of hereafter?

But let such Men as these know, that it is not a light Offence that they commit in all this. There is a time coming when they shall render a severe Account for these their Delusions: And undergo a *Punishment* not only proportionable to their *own Sins*, but to all that *Deluge* of *Evil* which by such *Principles* as these, has broke in upon the *World* in these latter days.

It was one of those great Evils for which *God* pronounced that severe Denuntiation against the *Jews* heretofore, *Isaiah* v. 20. That they call'd *Evil* *Good*, and *Good* *Evil*; they put *Darkness* for *Light*, and *Light* for *Darkness*; *Bitter* for *Sweet*, and *Sweet* for *Bitter*: that is, they confounded the *Natures* of Things, destroy'd all Distinction betwixt *Good* and

Isaiah v. 24.

Evil, Vertue and Vice ; they ran down Piety as a vain Practice, and recommended Profaneness, as true Gallantry and Bravery : Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust ; because they have cast away the Law of the LORD of Hosts, and despised the Word of the Holy One of Israel.

Secondly, A Man may become the *Occasion*, and so partake of *Other mens Sins*, not only by his *Evil Doctrine*, but by the *Scandal and Influence of a Bad Example*.

And that, not only if he thereby designs to lead them into *Sin*, but tho' he should not have the least *desire*, much less *intention* so to do. For *Sin* being always *scandalous*, and apt to *give offence*, He who do's any thing that he ought not, and thereby leads his *Brother from his Duty* ; must answer to God not only for the *Evil* that he did, but for all the *Consequences* of it, to the *deceiving* of any Other into the like *Offence*. And thus the *Holy Scripture* not only condemns *Jeroboam* for making *Israel to sin*, upon the account of the *Calves* that he set up in *Dan* and *Bethel*, on purpose to draw them away from the true *Worship of God* : 1 *Kings* xii. 28. It is too much for you to go up to *Jerusalem* ; Behold thy Gods, O *Israel*, which brought thee up out of the Land
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of Egypt :. But represents St. Peter to us as Guilty of leading the *Gentile Converts* into Error ; tho' by complying as he did with the *Judaizing Christians* he design'd only to condescend to their weakness, and not to give any the least cause of Offence to the Others.

The Case was in short this : There were in those first times many among the *Jews* who tho' they readily embraced the *Gospel of Christ*, yet could not presently perswade themselves that they ought to abandon all the *Rites and Ceremonies* of their own Law. With these therefore the *Apostles* thought fit to bear for a while, and to permit them to observe their former *Customs*, as far as was consistent with the *Nature of Christianity* so to do. But for the *Gentile Converts*, those who had never been at all subject to the Law, to them they preach'd a *Gospel liberty*, and exhorted them not to submit themselves to any such burden.

St. Peter being at *Antioch*, in a Church which St. Paul had establish'd of this latter sort, freely for a time communicated with them ; not making any distinction of *Meats or Drinks*, nor at all observing the Law of *Moses* in any of those things. But it happen'd whilst he was there, that certain Brethren came down from the Church of *Jerusalem* to him, who were still zealous for the Law ; and in
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compliance with these, He began whilst they were with Him to alter his manner of living, and no longer to use his former liberty, but to live again after the manner of the Jews. *He withdrew,* Gal. ii. — 12. *says St. Paul, and separated himself, fearing them of the circumcision.*

This example of his led many of the *Jewish Converts*, who before had lived in all freedom with the *Gentiles*, into the like Abstinence; insomuch that — 13. *Barnabas himself was carried away with the dissimulation; And so began to raise some doubts and disturbances in that Church.* But St. Paul reproved him — 14. *openly before them all: He charged him that he did not walk uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel:* — 11. *He withstood him to the face, and tells us plainly He was to be blamed: And that for Compelling the Gen-* — 14. *tiles to live as do the Jews; i. e. for encouraging them to it, and perswading them falsely by his example, that it was necessary for them so to do.*

It is in the Case of Sin now, as it was in that of an *involuntary injury* under the Law. If a Man Exod. xxi. 33. *open'd or digged a pit, and neglected to cover it, and another man's Oxe or Ass fall therein, tho' he made it only for his own use, and had not the least design of doing thereby any prejudice to his Neighbour, yet because he did not take due care to* — 34. *fence it, and prevent all occasion of harm from happening*

happening by it, he was to repair his Neighbours dammage, and give Money to him for the *Oxe* or *Ass*, and the *dead beast was to be his*.

And so here : If a Man do's any thing that may be apt to lead another into *Sin*, and takes not that due care he ought to prevent his being *deceived* by it, and another be thereby encouraged to do Evil, he shall answer for his neglect : And if his *Action* was not only *scandalous* but *sinful* too ; *Evil* in its self, as well as *apt* to draw others into *Sin* ; he shall be called to an account before *God* not only for his own but also for his Neighbours *Soul* ; and his *Sin* shall be required yet one fold more of him for the occasion it gave to his Brother to do wickedly.

There is yet one way more whereby a Man may give occasion to, and so partake of other Mens *Sins*, and which comes yet nearer to the Case of *Timothy* in the *Text*, than any I have hitherto named ; and that is,

Fourthly ; By advancing *Evil Men* to *Places* of *Trust* and *Power*, and thereby giving them opportunity to do much more *Mischief*, than they could have done in a *private Capacity*.

I need not say how great a part of the *Calamities* under which the *World* now labours might be prevented, were none but Men of great *Integri-*

ty, and *Abilities* suitable to the Station to which they are called, ever permitted to have any Rule or Authority, either in *Civil* or *Religious* concerns. Such as these, would not only not do any Hurt themselves, but would in a little time either by their *Influence* and *Example*, or else by a due *severity* against *Offenders* restrain others from doing it. But *when the Blind lead the Blind*; When they who should teach, and make others *Good*, are not *Good* themselves; what wonder if we see so little *sense* of *Piety* among the *People*, when there is so little of it among those that should set them an Example?

It is therefore certainly a *Great Care* that those ought to have, whose concern it is to provide that none but *Honest* and *Worthy* Men be admitted into such *Stations*, where if they are inclined to be Evil, they may do a great deal of mischief to those below them. And if instead of having such a *Care*, as far as is possible, not to suffer any wicked and profligate Persons to receive any Favour or Countenance from them, they shall either take no *Care* at all, or it may be, (which has sometimes happen'd) be well-enough contented that the *vilest Wretches* should be the most honour'd and promoted by them; what less can they expect than to answer for those *Sins*, which such Men by their means have had the *Opportunity* to *Commit*?

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When *Jeroboam*, whom we before mention'd, had set up his *two Calves* in *Dan* and *Bethel*, and exhorted the People no more to go up to *Jerusalem*, but to worship the Gods which he had made for them; we read, *1 Kings* xiii. 33. that for the better carrying on his design, he provided Priests for them of the lowest of the people; such as he thought fit for his purpose, that would be ready for any thing he should command them to do; whoſoever would be consecrated Him, and he became one of the Priests of the High-places. And how heinously God relented this, we may see in the very next Verse; And this thing became sin unto the House of *Jeroboam*, even to cut it off and to destroy it from off the face of the Earth. *1 Kings* xiii. 34

But because the Great Aggravation of *Jeroboam's Sin* was that he admitted such Fellows into the Priest hood on purpose to debase Religion, and confirm the People in the Idolatry which he design'd to establish among them; We will look farther to the Instance of the Text, where neither of these things can be supposed. Here the only fault we can imagine *Timothy* was capable of being Guilty of, must have been the not being so careful and circumspect as he ought, in trying and examining such Persons as he admitted into any Holy Office in the Church. And yet *St. Paul* having exhorted him to this Care in

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A Sermon Preached before

the former part of the Text, if we take his words in that sense in which they are more generally understood; Lay hands suddenly on no man; makes use of this consideration to enforce it upon Him in the latter, that otherwise he should be responsible to God for all that mischief which should accrue to the Church by the means of such persons as he admitted into the Government of it, without that due Caution he ought to have used in a matter of such importance; Neither be thou partaker of other mens sins.

Isaer. ad Dem.
n. 30.

I shall conclude this point with that advice which the Heathen Orator once gave to his Friend: If you should ever come to be in Authority, says he, Employ no wicked Person in any of your Affairs; for whatsoever faults He commits, the blame will be sure to fall on you.

And this may serve for the first way whereby we may become partakers of other Mens Sins, viz. by giving Occasion to the Committing of them.

The (2d.) is, By our Approving of them when Committed.

Chrysost. in
Rom. Hom. V.
pag. 46, 47.

And this too is a Circumstance which renders a Man not only partaker of anothers Sin, but oftentimes more heinously guilty than He who committed it. A Man may fall into Sin by Ignorance or Surprise; may be hurried on by his Passions, and carried away in such a manner by the violence of temptation,

tion, as not to be able to command Himself, and to withstand the force of them. And this tho' it will not *altogether excuse*, yet will *lessen* and *extenuate* a Mans Guilt; will render him tho' not *innocent*, yet not *extremely ill*: He may *Commit the Sin*, and yet be so far from being *pleased* with it, that he may *abhor* himself for *Committing* of it.

But there can be no Excuse for any one to *justify* and *approve* what he *knows* to be *Evil*. Here is no room for *passion* or *surprise*: In short, it must be the Evidence of a Soul harden'd in wickedness, not only to *do* what is *Evil*, but to *take pleasure* in it; and to *applaud* and *encourage* the practice of it.

Now two ways there are whereby we may declare our *Approbation* of anothers Sin: and by both, but especially by the former of which, we shall be sure to render our selves *partakers* of it.

1st. By making some *Advantage* to our selves by it.

2^{dy}. By *Justifying* and *Applauding* of it to others.

1st. By making some *Advantage* to our selves by it.

This was the *Case* of *Ahab* in the business of *Naboth*, and for which *God* charges him with all the *Murder* and *Oppression*, that without his *Knowledge* or *Direction* had been committed in it, 1 *Kings* xxi.

1 Kings xxi.

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He desired by any means to have purchased Naboth's Vineyard, and he was much discontented because he could not perswade Him to part with it. He laid him down upon his Bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread; but it does not Appear that he at all design'd by any unjust Violence to ravish it from Him.

- But his Wife wrote Letters to the Elders of his City, and commanded them saying; Proclaim a Fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: and let two men, sons of Belial, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the King; and then carry him out, and stone him that he may die.
- 11. This they did, and put him to death accordingly:
- 15. And then the Queen first made her Husband acquainted with what was done. But what then was Abab's Crime? Why, he received the News with satisfaction; he was pleased with what had pass'd; and he rose up from his bed, and went down to take possession of the Vineyard. And for this God charges him by Elijah with all the Violence that without his knowledge had been before committed. Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed and also taken possession? therefore, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.
- 19.

The truth is, so great is the Equity of this Proceeding, that we find even the positive Laws of most Countries,

Cuntries, to observe the same measure. He that conceals a Thief, and receives what is stolen, and partakes with him in his Booty; shall, if discovered, be look'd upon as if he had committed the Theft: And therefore Solomon says of such a one, Prov. xxix. 24. That he hateth his own Soul, that is, He puts his Life in danger by it. And for what concerns the Conscience, is even by the Heathen Moralists themselves adjudged as much a Thief as the other. And the Reason of this is clear, Because by joining with the Sinner at the last, and partaking with him in the Advantage for which the Villany was committed, instead of correcting him for it himself, or bringing him forth to a publick Punishment; he plainly declares his Consent to what was done, and both preserves him, and encourages him to do the like again.

Nay but, 2^{dly}, Tho' we should not make any Advantage to our selves by the Sins of others; yet our very justifying and applauding of them, would of themselves be sufficient, to render us partakers of them.

The Malignity of Sin lies not so much in what we do, as in the Affections of the Heart, the Will and Intention with which we do it. The outward Act may accidentally add indeed to the Aggravation of our Guilt: But 'tis the Heart and the Affections of

Αυτοτελες
καρμης, & ο
προσδεχμενος,
& ο κεν ιαs.
Phocyl.

of that to which *God* principally looks; and for which we shall either be *acquitted* or *condemn'd* at the last day. A man may do that which is in its self very *innocent*, and yet commit a great *Sin* by doing it, if he *thought* it to be *Evil*, and yet did it. And on the other side, there are such *Circumstances* wherein what is in its self *unlawful*, may yet without *Sin* be done by us, if a man were *invincibly*, and therefore *excusably*, *ignorant* that it was so.

Mat. v. 28.

— 22.

He that *loves* any *Evil*, and wishes for an *Opportunity* to commit it, and would be sure to embrace it if he had, is already *guilty* of it, tho' he should never find the *Opportunity* he desires for it. Thus in the *Instances* which our *Saviour Christ* himself gives us, *Matth. v.* *He that looks upon a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart*: *He that is angry with his brother*, and would do him a mischief if he could, is already a *Murderer*, though he never should be able to strike his *Ponyard* into his *Breast*. And therefore in the *Case* before us; If when a *Sin* is done by another, We are pleased with it, we *commend* the *Fact*, and so declare our selves to be in our *Hearts* *consenting* to it; we evidently thereby, as far as concerns our *Will* and *Inclinations*, bear a *part* in it, and shall accordingly be accounted in *God's sight* to have a share in the *Guilt* of it.

Hence

Hence it is that we may observe, how studious Good men have always shew'd themselves, in flying the very *Conversation of Sinners*: As if their *keeping company with Evil men*, should seem to some an *Approving of their Evil Actions*. It was the Resolution of *Holy David*, Psal. ci. that he would not suffer any *wicked man to stand before him*, to dwell in his *House*, or receive the least *Favour and Countenance from him*. And in the *cxixth Psalm*, v. 115. he makes it the *Consequence of his own resolving to be Good*, to drive all such from him as would not be so in like manner with him: *Depart from me ye Evil-doers, I will keep the Commandments of my God.*

And the same was the *Advice which St. Paul gave to the Corinthians*, 1 Ep. v. 11. He bids them not to keep company with a *wicked Christian*: *If any man, says he, that is called a Brother be a Fornicator, or Covetous, or a Railer, or a Drunkard, or an Extortioner, with such a One no not to Eat.* And again, in his 2^d to *Timothy*, c. iii. having set down a *large Catalogue of Sinners* that should rise up in the *latter days*; he bids us, ver. 5. *From such turn away.* And *St. John* in his 2^d *Epistle*, having given the same *Advice to the Person to whom he there writes*, that if any of those who had deny'd the *Faith of* 2 Ep. Jo. 7. *Christ*, after having been once made acquainted with it, should come to her, *she should not receive them* — 12.
into

into her house, nor bid them God speed; subjoins this
 2 Ep. Jo. 11. very thing as the Reason of it, *For he that biddeth
 them God speed, is-partaker of their Evil deeds.*

And tho' I should be very unwilling to pronounce any thing rashly in a Matter of such a Nature, and am sensible there are many Cases; some wherein a man cannot avoid having to do with wicked men, as in the Common Concerns and Affairs of this World: Others in which a man may worthily keep company with them, as our Saviour did with the *Publicans* and *Sinners* heretofore, the better to gain some Opportunity to reclaim their Manners, and convert them from their *Evil ways*: Yet I cannot but think it worth the while of a *Christian* to consider with himself, how he will otherwise be able to excuse himself hereafter to *God Almighty*, that he has received, loved, embraced the most profligate Sinners; shewn his Favour and Countenance to the most daring Rebels against Piety and Religion; and delighted in the Conversation of those now, whose Portion he deprecates, and whose Companion he would be very unwilling to become at all adventures hereafter. Nay perhaps has done yet more than this: has loved them for their very Vices; been pleased with their Profaneness and Debauchery; and smiled sometimes at those Sins in others, which he would have been ashamed to commit himself.

'But

But I must not insist upon all these things : and therefore,

3dly, and to conclude this whole matter ; The last *Circumstance*, whereby we may become partakers of other mens Sins, is, By neglecting to hinder them from committing them, when we might, and ought to have done it.

Now tho' this be a *circumstance* which seems more especially to regard those whom God hath set up as *Watchmen* over the *House* of *Israel*, yet is there no one that must think himself altogether unconcern'd in it. We all of us I hope have, I am sure we all of us should have the same *Zeal* for the *Glory* of *God*, and the same *Charity* for the *Salvation* of one anothers *Souls*. And tho' God has indeed in a particular manner appointed some certain Persons to watch more than others for your *Salvation*, and to call upon you to look to your selves, and not give way to the *Tempter* : yet whosoever he be that sees another about to do that which he knows will be odious to *God*, scandalous to *Good men*, and without a timely *Repentance* ruinous to his own *Soul*, and has an opportunity to admonish him of his *Sin*, and to hinder his committing of it, and yet neglects so to do ; let him fear, lest what *God* once denounc'd against the *Prophet Ezekiel* heretofore, be finally verified in himself ;

c. 33. 8. *When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man,*

E

thou

thou shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way ; That wicked man shall die in his Iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.

But though we are therefore all of us obliged, as we tender our own Souls, to do what we can in our several Capacities to save others; and in order thereunto should hinder them from *sinning*, whenever it lies in our power so to do : Yet it is not to be doubted; but that such persons as either by *Nature* or *Friendship*, or any the like Engagement, ought to have a more particular concern than others, for their Neighbour's Welfare; or else by their *Place*, and *Business*, and *Character*, are engaged in a more especial manner to watch over them, should be more than ordinarily careful as to this matter, and will have much more than others to answer for, if they be not.

And two waies in general there are, whereby such persons must labour to hinder Men from *sinning*, as ever they mean to clear themselves from being *Partakers* in their *Iniquities*.

First, By discouraging Sin all they can before it be committed : By setting forth the Folly and Unreasonableness of it now, and the great danger that shall certainly be the consequence of it hereafter : By shewing the Vanity of all those little Pretences, in which wicked Men are apt to put their trust ; and

not

not leaving them any *lopes* of *Impunity*, either in this World or in the next, without a *true Repentance* of their *Sins*, and a *Reformation* from them.

Secondly, By a *severe Enquiry* into, and *Punishment* of it after. This indeed is what the *great Temper* and *Moderation* of our *present Discipline*, that I do not say some *Defect* in it, permits not us, as *St. Paul* here commanded *Timothy* to do. We cannot call *Sinners* publickly into the *Church*, and lay open their *Crimes* to them, and *rebuke* them before *All*, that *others also may fear*. But the *Civil Magistrate* has great opportunities of supplying this *Defect*; and no doubt God will require it so much the more at their hands, in that it is now no longer in ours. There is indeed a *Mercy* to be remembred and shewn in *Judgment*; and our own *Frailty* ought to admonish us to make great *Allowances* for other mens *Infirmities*. But there may be an *Excess* even in *Good Nature* it self; and whatever the *Consequence* be, care must be taken that neither the *Honour* of God be profan'd, nor his *Laws* despis'd; that neither *Virtue* be run down, nor *Vice* encouraged: And to that end Men must be kept from *open* and *scandalous Sins* at least, if they cannot from others; and be punish'd even in *Mercy* now, that if possible they may be reform'd, and so not *perish* for ever.

And let us then

2ly, Which was the other general point we proposed to consider (the consequent Application of all these Reflections) be perswaded to endeavour what in us lies to prevent both our own and other mens Sins. Instead of Approving and Encouraging any in their Wickedness. let us, as our Apostle advises, *Heb. 10. 24. Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.* Instead of giving them any occasion, or laying any stumbling-block in their way, whereby to lead them into Sin, let us by our good Example both teach them what they ought to do, and if possible, make them in love with it. And let us look upon our selves to lie under the same Engagement to God for one another, that Judah once took upon himself for his Brother Benjamin, *Gen. 43. 9. Of my hand shalt thou require him; if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever.*

I am sensible that I am now exhorting you to a Duty but very little, if at all, consider'd by most Men. We think it to be enough for us to search out our own Souls, and account with God for our own Miscarriages: And may perhaps be ready to complain of this as some new Contrivance against your Liberty, to call upon you to repent for other Mens

Men's sins. But if the *Case* be indeed so as the *Text* plainly implies, and as I think I may presume to say, I have in some measure made it appear to be: If there be many waies by which we may, and by some or other of which it is probable the very best of us have rendred our selves *partakers of other Mens sins*: Then I am sure it must remain, that we have a concern to look beyond our own particular Offences; and to enquire to how many *sins* of others we may have contributed by any of these means I have before mentioned; and the less we have been wont to do this heretofore, it will argue the *greater*, not lesser necessity for us to set very seriously about it now.

It is indeed an amazing Reflection to sit down and think, How much more *Guilt* we may possibly contract by every *sin* that we commit, than we are any of us *willing* to believe, or it may be able to comprehend. For not to say any thing at all of those common *Aggravations*, which we are every where taught to *examine* our selves about: Such as *sinning* against *Knowledg*, against the *Checks* of our own *Consciences*, and the *Motions* of *God's Holy Spirit* to the contrary: *sinning* against often repeated *Promises*, against the most *serious Resolutions*, against the most *solemn* and *sacred Vows* or *Obedience*: In a word, *sinning* against many *providential Admonitions*; such
as

James v.
19, 20.

as *Trouble, Afflictions, Losses, Sickness, and the like;* sent by *God* on purpose to reclaim us. Let us consider only this one thing now before us, How many *Men* our *sinning* may be the *Ruine* of? How many *souls* may, for ought we know, perish by our *means*? And what a desperate increase this must add to our own *Guilt*? For if he who *converts a sinner* from the *Error* of his way, and so is instrumental to the *saving* but of one *soul* from death, shall for that cover a multitude of his own *sins*:—O! then, how fatally must we multiply *evil* against our selves, when by our *neglect* of our *duty* we lead perhaps Multitudes into error, and involve their *souls* in everlasting *Destruction*.

If we have therefore hitherto neglected so serious a *Consideration*; If our *Repentance* has been only for the *sins* we our selves have committed, without any regard to the *Mischief* we may have done our *Brother* by them; Let us now at least be persuaded to think that we have yet one great part of our *Humiliation* still behind; to *deprecate God's Wrath* not only for our selves but for others too; and implore his *Forgiveness* of all those *sins* which have ever by our means been committed by any in the world, and that he would not impute them either to their, or our *Damnation*.

This

This if we do with that affectionate earnestness as becomes so great an *Aggravation*, I am persuaded we shall not only very much increase our *Contrition*, and so perfect our *Repentance* for what is past; but may also by the *Grace of God*, establish our selves the better against returning to our *Evil Ways* for the Time to come. And our desires not to partake in other Men's sins, be improved into one *Motive* more, to keep us from continuing in our own.

I shall conclude this Discourse, after the same manner, and almost in the same Words that S. Basil once did his *Canonical Epistle* to *Amphilochius*, upon the occasion of that very Reflection we have now been making.

' Let us, saies he, consider the terrible Judgment of God, and the day of his Appearing, and let us fear lest we perish in other men's Sins. Bevereg.
Euvod. tom.
ll. p. 367.

' Let us call to mind the Admonitions of God to us; What Evils we have been exposed to, What Calamities we have suffered: And let these convince us, That for the Iniquities of our Lives we have been forsaken by him.

' Our People have been led into Captivity, our Brethren dispersed far and near; Because those who profess the Name of Christ, have yet lived so contrary to their Profession.

' But

‘ But if after all this Men will not understand,
‘ That for these Causes the Wrath of God is come
‘ upon us, wherefore should we after this have any
‘ thing more to do with them ?

‘ Nevertheless, let us not cease Day nor Night,
‘ in Publick and in Private, to intreat and beseech
‘ them to consider these things ; but let us not be
‘ drawn away with their Wickedness.

‘ Let us wish and pray, That if it shall please
‘ God we may yet gain them at the last, and deliver
‘ them out of the Snares of the Devil : but if this
‘ we cannot do, yet at least let us save our own
‘ Souls, tho we cannot theirs, and not partake
‘ with them in their *sins*, lest we also partake with
‘ them in their *Destruction*.

Now to him that *sitteth upon the Throne*, and to the
Lamb ; be ascribed as is most due, *Blessing*,
and Glory, and *Wisdom*, and *Thanksgiving*, and
Honour, and *Power*, and *Might*, for ever and
ever : Amen.

F I N I S.

